



THE SERVICE, MAINTENANCE & REPAIR GUIDE FOR ROADWORTHY FLEETS



HELPING YOU BUILD
A RELIABLE, COMPLIANT
AND ROAD-READY FLEET.

N  **RTHGATE**

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INTRODUCTION

This guide outlines best practices for maintaining a compliant fleet, keeping your drivers and vehicles safely on the road, and more.

Service, Maintenance and Repair (SMR) costs are an often underestimated part of your fleet's total cost of ownership (TCO).

These costs aren't static and will grow over time. Failing to properly account for these expenses can have significant financial consequences, especially as your vehicles age and costs increase.



STAYING ON THE ROAD: COMPLIANCE, SAFETY AND DOWNTIME

KEEPING A ROADWORTHY FLEET IS A BUSINESS-CRITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Compliant vehicles are essential for the wellbeing of drivers, the environment, other road users, and to meet strict Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) regulations. DVSA officers have the authority to stop commercial vehicles at any time for roadside checks, and any failure to meet required standards could result in serious consequences. These range from penalty points on a driver's licence to significant fines, and in severe cases, even legal prosecution.

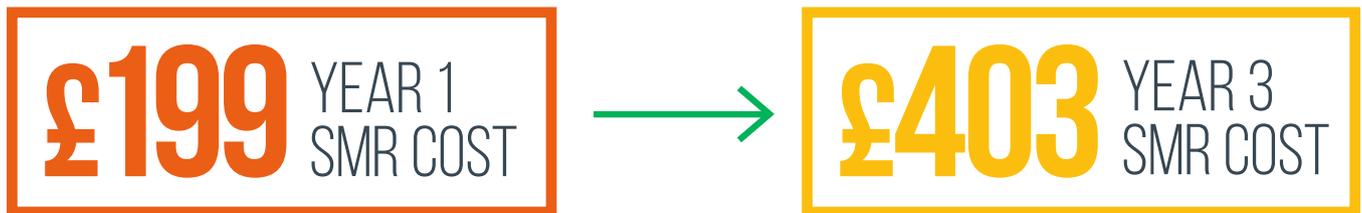
Beyond compliance, vehicle downtime is a costly and often overlooked factor. On average, fleet vehicles experience [four days of unplanned downtime per year](#), impacting operations, service delivery, and customer satisfaction. Northgate research highlights the scale of this impact, revealing that downtime costs UK businesses around [£800 per vehicle, per day it is off the road](#) (2018)*.



*Source: Survey by IFF Research August 2018 on behalf of Northgate Vehicle Hire

THE RISING COST OF SERVICE, MAINTENANCE & REPAIR (SMR)

For internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, on average:



THAT'S MORE THAN A 100% INCREASE IN JUST TWO YEARS, DRIVEN BY FACTORS SUCH AS:

- ✗ Increased wear and tear due to vehicle ageing and mileage.
- ✗ Need for replacement parts becoming more frequent.
- ✗ Manufacturer warranties expiring.
- ✗ Ongoing shortages of skilled mechanics and increasing labour costs.
- ✗ An average 35% rise in parts prices over the past four years.

*Source: Fleet News

THE IMPACT OF VEHICLE AGE

Fleet data shows that the proportion of SMR spend on vehicles aged four years or more has jumped significantly from 28% in 2018 to 43% in 2022.*

This shift is largely due to extended vehicle lifecycles commonly attributed to continued supply challenges. With many fleets holding on to vehicles for longer, often driven by limited vehicle availability and the fact that EVs aren't yet a viable fit for every operation, there's a growing reliance on older, used vehicles*. As a result, service, maintenance and repair (SMR) costs naturally increase, along with the risk of unexpected downtime.

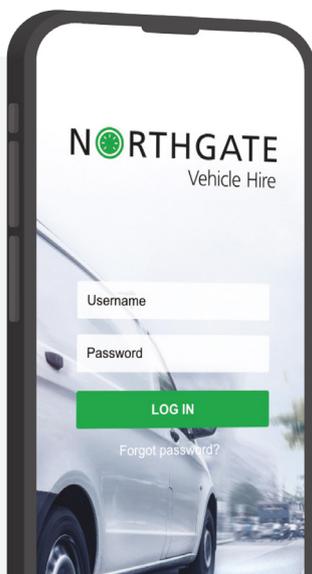
*Source: Fleet News

BUILDING A RELIABLE, ROAD-READY FLEET

A proactive and consistent approach to vehicle maintenance is the foundation of a high-performing fleet. Daily checks, defect reporting, and a structured service schedule help protect your drivers and your business' bottom line.

DAILY CHECKS AND DEFECT MANAGEMENT

If small issues are left unresolved, they can escalate into major faults. Encouraging drivers to complete daily walkaround checks and report any defects immediately is the easiest way to detect issues early. By catching these early, you avoid costly breakdowns, reduce safety risks, and stay compliant with DVSA inspection standards.



NORTHGATE VEHICLE INSPECTION APP

The Northgate Vehicle Inspection App keeps your fleet mobile with a paperless system that allows you to track and complete vehicle inspections at the touch of a button, and more.

Our recent case study showcases the full benefits of our app in real-life situations.

[READ HERE](#)

THE POWER OF PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE

Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) ensures your vehicles are serviced at regular intervals. This approach offers several key benefits:

- ✔ Prevent minor issues from developing into mechanical failures.
- ✔ Extend vehicle lifespan - regular oil changes, brake checks, and component servicing protect critical systems like the engine and transmission.
- ✔ Minimise unplanned downtime - reduced risk of unexpected failures that disrupt business operations.

BUILDING A RELIABLE, ROAD-READY FLEET

PREDICTABLE COSTS, BETTER BUDGETING

One of the biggest advantages of following a consistent SMR schedule is cost predictability to improve financial control. You can plan and budget for routine servicing and repairs, avoiding the surprise of large, unexpected bills - helping you build a clearer picture of your fleet's TCO.

BOOST PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY

Well-maintained vehicles are more fuel-efficient, more reliable, improve driver comfort, and, in cases with personalised livery, can improve brand awareness. This not only enhances daily operations but contributes to lower emissions and reduced fuel costs, especially when aligned with any potential sustainability goals.

Most breakdowns can be avoided by a few simple checks:

DAILY

- ✓ Stay alert to any unusual sounds, dashboard alerts, or changes in performance - trust your instincts and check it out early.
- ✓ A slow-starting engine often signals a failing battery - don't ignore it.
- ✓ Regularly check tyre tread depth to stay safe and legal. Also, check for lumps, splits and cracks.
- ✓ Always check your fuel level and make sure you're using the correct fuel type when refuelling.

WEEKLY

- ✓ Check all tyre pressures, including the spare, are at the correct level for the load being carried.
- ✓ Check and top-up the vehicle's windscreen washing fluid.
- ✓ Wash the vehicle's windows, wipe all the lights and check for any blown bulbs.

MONTHLY

- ✓ Check engine oil level is between the maximum and minimum marks on the dipstick.
- ✓ Check for sufficient liquid in the cooling system. Top up as necessary and include antifreeze to protect against overheating and frost damage.
- ✓ Wash and polish your vehicle to keep the paintwork in good condition.
- ✓ Check regularly for any signs of rust forming and treat early before it spreads

BUILT-IN SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE FOR NORTHGATE CUSTOMERS

Northgate customers get more than just vehicle hires. Our hire solutions all come with service and maintenance included as standard.

You gain access to a nationwide network of expert maintenance and repair support designed to keep businesses moving and fleets roadworthy and hassle-free, helping you focus on your core business functions with minimal distractions.

NATIONWIDE WORKSHOP ACCESS

Our extensive network of service centres across the UK means you're never far from expert support. Whether your fleet operates locally or across regions, we've got you covered.

MOBILE TECHNICIANS KEEPING YOU MOVING

Our fleet of mobile technicians operate nationwide, each covering a 60-mile/60-minute radius* to deliver fast, flexible support when and where you need it. We also host Mobile Clinics for customers with multiple vehicles requiring service, maintenance, or repair (SMR) events helping to reduce fleet travel emissions in line with your business's ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) goals.

*Not all geographic areas are covered. Contact us to confirm availability.

FAST TURNAROUND TIMES

We understand that every hour off the road costs your business. That's why our processes are built around minimising downtime - with efficient scheduling, skilled teams, and priority access to repairs and maintenance.

CONVENIENT PROXIMITY

Our workshops are strategically located to ensure your vehicles spend less time travelling for servicing and more time where they belong - on the road, serving your customers.

IN-HOUSE EXPERTISE

All Northgate workshops are staffed by highly trained mechanics, including qualified EV technicians, ensuring your vehicle - electric or ICE - is maintained to the highest standards.

SUPPORTING UK FLEET MANAGERS WITH NORTHGATE EXPERTISE

Do you want to eliminate the administrative tasks of running a fleet, so you have more time to run your business?

Our Fleet Management packages mean we can provide as little or as much support as you need with a range of available add-ons, allowing our services to be tailored to your unique business needs.

A FULL FLEET MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

We deal with everything from compliance to cost control and more, leaving you to run your business, with a member of the Northgate Fleet Team on-call when you need them.

TAKING AWAY THE BURDEN OF ADMINISTRATION

We'll monitor upcoming service, MOT, tax and insurance renewals, and repair of mechanical defects. We also take care of communicating with your drivers, for any service events.

REDUCE COSTS TO YOUR FLEET

For non-Northgate vehicles, we will check and verify costs for every maintenance event to ensure approved suppliers are capturing repairs that are still under the manufacturer's warranty.

MINIMISE VEHICLE DOWNTIME

Our large network of 55 owned workshops and over 4,000 approved suppliers across the UK means our team are never too far away to get your vehicle back on the road - with convenient access to an approved garage within 15 miles on average.

ADDITIONAL NORTHGATE PRODUCTS

VEHICLE INSPECTION APP

The vehicle inspection app that ensures checks are done how and when you need them. View your entire fleet's condition in one place and instantly access any inspection with just a click.

[LEARN MORE](#)

FLEET MANAGEMENT

Our services cover every aspect of fleet operations, including vehicle hire, maintenance, compliance and driver safety.

[LEARN MORE](#)

WE BUY, YOU RENT

A fair market price for your existing vehicle and all the benefits of renting.*

[LEARN MORE](#)

DRIVE TO ZERO

The knowledge and tools needed to transition fleets to Electric Vehicles in a way that makes financial and practical sense.

[LEARN MORE](#)

FLEET COMPLIANCE GUIDE

A step-by-step breakdown of the key factors of a successfully compliant fleet - free to download.

[LEARN MORE](#)

* Terms and conditions apply.

If you're not sure which options are most suitable for your business, Northgate can help you decide. Contact a member of the team today.

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